

VAMPI
#99

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VAMPIRELLA

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**SHE
WAS THE
WANTON
LOVE
GODDESS
OF ANCIENT
JUDEA...**

**...AND
TO LOVE
SALOME
WAS
THE
KISS OF
DEATH!**



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VAMPIRELLA



SEPTEMBER 1981

NUMBER 99

VAMPI Shadroph is joined to murder Pen, and an army of murderous demons stands between Vampirella and his rescue! **5**

MISSING YOU Despite everything, he loves her madly! And he will do anything to find her again! **19**

SALOME She was a child in the alluring body of a woman. She was a temptress who desired a saint! **29**

FRIENDS The pills, the rope, and the knife are all ready. She is his friend's wife, but so what? **39**

PANTHA The keys to Pantha's lost memories and the death of Danny lie in a deadly jungle! **51**

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Vampi's Scarlet Letters

VAMPIRELLA #97 was an excellent issue! Most of the material was so good that a real thundering dud like "Hershey's Rock" couldn't ruin it. I am grateful that if Warren Magazines had to print that execrable latrine liner you assigned a horrible artist to do the equally horrible story. That way, the good work of one talent will not be ruined by the hackwork of another. But enough! I was saying what a great issue it was, wasn't I? "Army of the Dead" was really just a set-up for some rap 'em zap 'em action to come, but as such it was a fine story. The tension between Vampi and Pantha revolving around Adam was beautifully done. I have long looked forward to those two being teased again, and the installment did not disappoint. Gonzalo Mayo's artwork was fine, really fine.

The St. Knight story, "The Many Faces of God," despite the fact that it blasted the new wave of rip-off religious cults, was merely a so-so story. I like the fact that Cassandra is not presented totally sympathetically. She is something of a bitch, isn't she? Gosh, just like real life.

Jose Ortiz really makes Pantha come alive. She is giving Vampi a run for her money in the beauty department. I am beginning to feel that I know her. On the other end of the spectrum, his rendering of the undead zombie was masterful.

"Wormbrand" was a great little story. The human and sci-fi elements were in perfect balance. A nice little surprise at the end of the magazine, and a blessed relief after "Hershey's Rock."

JAMIE BELASCO
Garfield Heights, Ohio

I am looking forward to reader response to issue #97 of VAMPIRELLA. Me, I never got past page nine. I'm still looking at it. Good old page nine. Vampiella looks so huscious and desirable, so mysterious and intense, so lithe and lovely, so soft and feminine, so powerful and dangerous, so voluptuous and curvaceous and loving and sympathetic, so...so long...

BURT WELCH
Boston, Mass.

I'd been hearing about VAMPIRELLA for some time, but was never much interested until recently. But when I fall, I fall hard! Two dollars is a lot of money, but it's a small price to pay to look at that body of unholy beauty.

BRUCE WILLIAMSON
Raleigh, N.C.

Rudy Nebres has come under a lot of fire in your letters column recently, so I guess a lot of people were happy to see Gonzalo Mayo's name alongside the illustrator's credit for the Vampi story in #97. However, this joy must have been subdued somewhat when they found out the story was only ten pages long. The ending was awfully abrupt. Was this a longer story that was cut back?

On the other hand, the Pantha story was more like two stories in one. Pantha's encounter with the rapist was a nice bit of 'revenge' fantasy, but Adam's adventures appear to be merely the start of a standard zombie tale. The only interest evoked was by the enigma of Moonchild's true nature.

The Cassandra St. Knight story was a rather confused, ho-hum diatribe against those easy targets, the insincere pseudo-religious fanatical cults. For the second time in a row, Margopoulos did effect a partial redemption of the script by tossing off an interesting homily on the last page.

The two backup stories were stark contrasts to one another. "Hershey's Rock" was nothing more than an elaborate setup for a pun that wasn't worth the trouble. At least author Kevin Duane had the good sense to baldly say what his purpose was. Bruce Jones, though, attempted to make a moral comment via an analogy concerning the justification for killing in "Wormbrand." However, his point was needlessly obscured by the science fiction elements of the story.

T. M. MAPLE
Toronto, Ontario

I was glad to see Rich Margopoulos give it to the religious cults with both barrels in his St. Knight story, "The Many Faces of God." Unfortunately, the very young people who need to be warned about the underhanded and unscrupulous ways of these groups are the very people who probably will never see the magazine. The cult leaders make quite sure that their young people are well insulated from the rest of the world. Television and radio broadcasts are, for the most part, forbidden, so you can imagine how they feel about comic books!

Though the ending of your story was a happy one, it was all too pat and easy. With one lecture by your heroine, the cult members saw the emptiness and exploitation of the cult and walked out.

MARLANNE FLOOD
Bakersfield, Calif.

The writing and artwork in VAMPIRELLA #97 were terrific. Enrich (for his cover), Gonzalo Mayo, Jose Ortiz, and Auraloon deserve special credit for their outstanding work on the three stories beautifully written by Rich Margopoulos.

But what I especially appreciated was the food for thought generously spiced throughout the magazine. For example, with Adam Van Helsing, Vampi, and Pantha sitting together in such close quarters in the car, one had to wonder if the old love triangle is soon to explode once again. I hope not, for I am beginning to really like Pantha, and I wish her happiness.

It was also interesting to see the rapist, in "A Night Full of Zombies," become a victim with the suddenness at which I'm sure he victimized others.

The Cassandra St. Knight story, "The Many Faces of God," provided an interesting forum for the examination of strong religious beliefs at odds. It was also a vivid fictional example of a man who uses religion to his own ends.

CHARLES DAVID HASKELL
New York, N.Y.

I have always assumed that the average reader of VAMPIRELLA is young. It is all the more surprising then, in scanning your letters page, to read letter after letter yearning after the good old days. Jose Gonzalex was the greatest! Why can't he draw Vampi? Gonzalo Mayo was the best! Whatever happened to him? Rudy Nebres stinks! Rich Margopoulos stinks! Bring back Archie Goodwin. The plain fact is that writers and artists move on, in life as well as in their art. If Gonzalex were chained to a drawing board and forced to do Vampi all his career, he would surely go mad. Economics as well as new artistic challenges dictate that artists move on. Thus, ...change, hard as it may be for some to accept. It might also be worthwhile to remind the readers that all the money that you folks may throw at the problem (to lure the best) cannot always solve the problem. We should all learn to stop pining for what was.

CARL POOLE
Dearborn, Mich.

**Vampi's
Scarlet Letters**
C/O WARREN PUBLISHING
115 EAST 32ND STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10009

prologue



VAMPIRELLA



CASSANDRA
ST. KNIGHT, STAGE
MENTALIST AND MY-
STIC SUPREME!

HER AURA
CRACKLING WITH UNIM-
AGINABLE POWER—I FIT
BEGGARS DESCRIP-
TION!

ST. KNIGHT!
I'VE HEARD SO MUCH
ABOUT HER! BUT I NEVER BE-
LIEVED THOSE STORIES
—TILL NOW!

SALUTATIONS,
VAMPIRELLA! AND YOU
TOO, CONRAD VAN HELSING!
THERE IS NO NEED TO BRIEF
ME! I KNEW FAR IN AD-
VANCE OF YOUR
COMING!

SPELL OF SLAUGHTER

Author: RICH MARGOPOULOS/Illustrator: GONZALO MAYO



YOU
KNEW?
BUT
BUT
HOW?

THERE IS
NO TIME FOR EX-
PLANATIONS. SUFFICE
TO SAY I HAVE THE
INFORMATION YOU
SEEK!



PENDRAGON
CAN BE FOUND
AT A DWELLING CALLED
SHADRACH'S ON FIFTH
AVENUE...



YOU
MEAN, THAT'S
IT? THAT'S
ALL YOU'RE
GOING TO
TELL US?

PLEASE,
CHILD! TRY TO
UNDERSTAND! HER
WAYS ARE NOT
OUR WAYS!



WELL,
SAID VAN
HELSENG! I
DO NOT WISH
TO BIND MY
KARMA* WITH
YOUR OWN!

IN FACT,
I HAVE DABBLED
IN YOUR COLLEC-
TIVE DESTINIES
FAR TOO MUCH
ALREADY!

*THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND DEEDS
THAT COMPOSE AN INDIVIDUAL'S
FATE



BUT
BEFORE YOU
DEPART A FINAL
WORD, VAMP-
IRELLA!

YES...?



YOU MUST
HASTEN! EVEN NOW
YOUR COMPANION'S LIFE
IS IN MORTAL
DANGER!

USING A SPECIAL POLICE PERMIT, VAMPIRELLA PARKS CONRAD'S SILVER ROLLS-ROYCE ON FIFTH AVENUE. WHEN THEY ALIGHT, BOTH DISCOVER SHADRACH'S TO BE...



AND INSIDE...



THE REPLY, HOWEVER, FROM THE COMELY FEMALE ATTENDANT IS NOT ENTIRELY UNEXPECTED!





DRAWING HIS SWORDCANE WITH COBRA-SWIFTNES, CONRAD IMPALES THE SHOCK-STUNNED WOMAN ON ITS SILVERN SHAFT!



WITH A CHOKED, GURGLING GASP, THE HELLSPAWN DIES, SLIDING OFF THE BLOOD-SUCK BLADE TO THE FLOOR!



SUDDENLY, SILENCE REIGNS IN THE SPA! A SOUNDLESSNESS SO ABSOLUTE, ONE COULD... QUITE LITERALLY... HEAR A PIN, OR BODY, DROP!



THE AGED PSYCHIC LUNGES WITHOUT WARNING, DRAWING FIRST BLOOD!

AND THE BATTLE BEGINS!



A BURLY WEIGHTLIFTER HURLS A THREE HUNDRED POUND BARBELL AT THE LITHE DRAGONNET!



CONRAD AND VAMPIRELLA RIP INTO THE DEMONIC HORDE! THE MEN AND WOMEN SHRIEK AS THEY TURN INTO THEIR TRUE DEMONIC SHAPES WITH THEIR LAST SPLUTTERING GASPS!



VAMPIRELLA'S FANGS CRINK DEEPLY AND CONRAD'S RAPIER BLADE SLASHES THROUGH THE GHOUISH THROAT!



WITHIN THE PRIVATE LAIR, IN ANOTHER PART OF THE SPA, SHADRACH CLOSELY SURVEYS THE SLAUGHTER OF HIS HAPLESS MINIONS!



THE RAVEN HAired ANGEL OF DEATH AND THE BLIND MAN BURST INTO A FORMER GYM...
NOW REDESIGNED FOR DARK RITUALS AND SATANIC SACRIFICES!



V-VAMPIRELLA!
I DON'T KNOW WHY... BUT
I SENSE DEATH IN THAT
DIRECTION!

THE
ALCOVE DOOR-I
IT'S GOT TO BE
PEN! IT'S GOT
TO...!



WELCOME,
VAMPIRELLA!
HAI HAI! YOU AND YOUR
SIGHTLESS FRIEND
ARE JUST IN
TIME.

...IN TIME
TO WITNESS PENDRAGON'S
UNTIMELY DEMISE, THAT
IS! HAI HAI!



YOU FIEND,
SHADRACHI! RELEASE
HIM... OR SO HELP
ME, I'LL PULL
YOU APART!

TEMPER,
TEMPER, YOU SEMI-
NAKED VIXEN! BITCH-
INESS WILL GET
YOU NOWHERE!



BOTH YOU
AND THIS TRUSSED
BUFFOON MUST PAY FOR
YOUR SIN! AND I
MEAN TO COLLECT!



MONTHS
AGO, PENDRAGON
DISRUPTED OUR
ORIGINAL CROWNING
OF THE COUNCIL'S
ANTI-POPE! FOR
THAT, HIS LIFE
IS FORFEIT!

AND WEEKS
AGO, YOU SLEW
MY VERY BROTHER,
FATHER JOSEPH,
THE SELF-SAME
ANTI-POPE! FOR
THAT, YOUR LIFE
IS FORFEIT!

SEE VAMPIRELLA #73



BEHOLD!
LUCIFER'S SWORD
OF LIGHT! HOW FITTING
THIS INFERNAL WEAPON
SHOULD BE THE INSTRU-
MENT OF YOUR COLLECT-
IVE DEATHS!







AND MY
VAMPIRIC THIRST!
ONLY HE DOESN'T HAVE
BLOOD SERUM SUBSTIT-
UTE STREAMING THROUGH
HIS VEINS TO CON-
TROL HIS BLOOD-
LUST LIKE
I DO!



I CAN HEAR
HIM CHARGING AT ME.
ATTACKING!

UNNNH—



NEVER
THOUGHT I'D
BE ON THE RECEIVING
END OF MY OWN
DRAKULONIAN
BITE!

I'VE GOT
TO KEEP HIM FROM
MY NECK!



BUT
HOLDING
CONRAD AT BAY
AND STOPPING
HIM ARE TWO
DIFFERENT
THINGS!



I NEED
A WEAPON!

WAIT!
HIS SWORDCANE!
HE MUST HAVE
DROPPED IT AF-
TER THE FIRST
SPELL-BOLT
STRUCK!



I'LL ORIENT
ON THE LUGGER
SWORD'S CRACK-
LING FLAMES!

IF THE ALTAR'S
ON MY SIDE... CONRAD'S
CANE MUST BE SLIGHTLY
IN FRONT. SO I'LL—





EN-TH
T-TH THE LUCIFER
SWORD. IT'S GROWING
HOTTER IN MY HAND!
FLAMES'RE SPREAD-
ING!



CAN'T
CONTROL IT!
CAN'T-I!



I CAN
SEE AGAIN! AND
CONRAD'S COMING
AROUND TOO!
BUT PEN!



FORGIVE ME,
VAMPIRELLA! ONCE
AGAIN, I'VE INADVERTENTLY
PLACED YOUR LIFE
ON THE LINE!

THERE IS NO
RECOURSE FOR ME. I FEAR,
BUT TO BREAK OFF OUR PRO-
LONGED COMRADESHIP...

IN
ORDER TO SPARE
YOU FURTHER
UNDUE PAIN!



YOU DO
THAT MORDEGA!
PENDRAGON, AND
I'LL BREAK BOTH
YOUR LEGS!

WH-WHAT?!

YOU HEARD
ME! WHEN I ARRIVED
ON EARTH YEARS AGO, YOU
WERE MY FIRST AND ONLY
FRIEND! AND HOW MANY TIMES
HAVE YOU SAVED MY SKIN
IN THE PAST. HMMMM?
LOTS!



WE'RE A TEAM!
TELL YOU WHAT, SINCE
I'M BETWEEN PICTURES RIGHT
NOW, LET'S GET BACK INTO
OUR OLD MAGIC ACT! WE
CAN EVEN OPEN RIGHT
HERE IN NEW YORK!
WHAT DO YOU
SAY?

I SAY
YES! WHAT DO
YOU THINK,
CONRAD?

I CONCUR!
PEN! ONLY I
WISH RIGHT
NOW MY HEAD
WOULD STOP
RINGING!



HE HAD AWAKENED GROGGILY TO THE SOUND OF THE TENT FLAPS SLAPPING AGAINST THE WOODEN POLE! HE REACHED OUT SLUGGISHLY TO CLOSE THE IMAGINED WINDOW IN THEIR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BEDROOM... ONLY TO FIND HIMSELF ON A MOUNTAINSIDE IN ITALY.

HE SAT UP IN ABRUPT TERROR, KNOWING INSTANTLY THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG. HE RAN A HAND QUICKLY OVER THE DARKENED SLEEPING BAG BESIDE HIM AND DISCOVERED THAT IT WAS EMPTY!

HEART HAMMERING PAINFULLY IN HIS CHEST, HE LURCHED OUTSIDE AND HE REALIZED HIS WORST FEAR: THE SHORT LEDGE THEY'D CAMPED ON WAS EMPTY. SHE WAS GONE!

MISSING YOU



HE SWALLOWED IN NUMB DISBELIEF, HARDLY DARING TO STAGGER TO THE ROCKY EDGE AND PEER OVER THE RIM.

EXPECTING TO SEE HER BODY SMEARED ON A BTRETCH OF SHALE 1,000 FEET BELOW.



INSTEAD, HIS EYES WERE MET BY A FLOATING WALL OF MIST CLUNG TO THE CLIFF FACE A DOZEN YARDS BENEATH HIM, OBSCURING EVERYTHING BELOW IT. STILL, THERE COULD BE NO QUESTION... SHE HAD SLIPPED AND GONE OVER THE EDGE. SHE WAS DEAD...!

HE REFUSED TO BELIEVE IT. YES, SHE WAS INEXPERIENCED, AND IT WAS A SHEER CLIFF, BUT HE HADN'T ACTUALLY SEEN HER BODY YET. THERE WAS STILL A CHANCE!



HIS INNER MIND LAUGHED AT HIM! SURE THERE WAS A CHANCE...FOR A PERSON WITH TWO EYES!

HE RAN BACK TO THE TENT AND DRESSED
HASTILY. HE SEARCHED THE AREA
CAREFULLY FOR SIGNS OF HER BELONG-
INGS AND DISCOVERED THAT SHE HAD
NOT ONLY DRESSED FIRST BUT HAD
TAKEN HER AXE WITH HER!



IF SHE WERE ALIVE SOMEWHERE,
PERHAPS HANGING TO A WALL BY HER
NAILS, SHE MIGHT NEED HIS HELP IM-
MEDIATELY! HE SLUNG THE COIL OF
ROPE OVER HIS SHOULDER AND PUSHED
BACK OUT INTO THE MORNING GLARE!



HE BEGAN BELAYING THE ROPE TO AN
OUTCROP OF ROCK IN PREPARATION TO
RAPPELING DOWN INTO THE MIST.



HE STOOD INDECISIVELY FOR A MOMENT, THINKING ABOUT
THE ARGUMENT THEY HAD HAD LAST NIGHT. AS THE FIRST
PANGS OF REMORSE CREEPT INTO HIS MIND, HE WAS
WASTING PRECIOUS MINUTES! HE QUICKLY PLACED THE
DOUBLED ROPE AROUND HIS THIGH, UP ACROSS HIS
CHEST AND OVER THE OPPOSITE SHOULDER, AND HE EAS-
ED HIMSELF OVER THE EDGE...



HE HAD STOOD AMID THE OTHER PARTY GUESTS, STARING
DRUNKENLY INTO HER TEAR-FILLED EYES. HE KNEW INSTANTLY!
HIS SECRETARY HAD TOLD HER... AND NOW HIS WIFE WAS THERE
WITH THAT LOOK ON HER FACE...

THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULD SAY SO HE SAID NOTHING...JUST WATCHED THE TEARS RUN SILENTLY DOWN HER SMOOTH, PINK CHEEKS TO HER TREMBLING LIPS. IT WAS SHE WHO SPOKE FIRST...ONLY TWO WORDS. BUT THEY WERE ENOUGH.

GOODBYE, ALLEN

HE FOLLOWED HER THROUGH THE EMBARRASSED GUESTS OUT INTO THE DRIVEWAY. SHE MOVED STIFFLY, A STRANGER ALREADY.

LINDA, WAIT!

SHE PASSED THEIR CAR AND HEADED FOR THE SIDEWALK. IT WAS SIX MILES TO THEIR HOME. HE JERKED OPEN THE DOOR OF THE TRIUMPH AND SLID IN! HIS HEAD REELED. HE SHOULDN'T BE DRIVING. CAREFULLY, HE EASED UP ALONG SIDE OF HER.

DARLING, WE MUST TALK- BETTER NOW THAN LATER. I

HE PAID OUT ROPE WITH HIS FREE HAND AND DESCENDED INTO THE FOG BANK. IT WAS INCREDIBLY THICK!

SHE WASN'T LISTENING. SHE MOVED DOWN THE DARK SIDEWALK AS THOUGH THE DIVORCE HAD ALREADY BEEN ARRANGED AND OVER WITH.

THEY HAD CLIMBED THIS VERY FACE ONLY YESTERDAY, YET NOW IT LOOKED TOTALLY UNFAMILIAR. HE HADN'T BEEN PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION YESTERDAY - THEY HAD FOUGHT AGAIN BITTERLY. IT WAS AN EXHAUSTING DAY.

THE COLD MIST SWIRLED LAZILY UP HIS NOSTRILS, SENDING A CHILL BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL DOWN HIS SPINE.

THEY ARRIVED AT THE LEDGE ABOVE JUST BEFORE DARK, PITCHING CAMP HASTILY, FALLING IMMEDIATELY ASLEEP. SWINGING HERE NOW, HE WISHED HE'D STUDIED THE GRANITE CLIFF MORE CAREFULLY.

HE PAID OUT MORE AND MORE ROPE AND ABRUPTLY EMERGED UNDERNEATH THE MIST. THE VALLEY BENEATH HIM WAS WELL-LIT YET HE COULD NOT DISCERN THE DOT OF HER RED PARKA AMONG THE ROCKS. AGAIN HOPE SURGED THROUGH HIM SHE MIGHT BE CLINGING TO THE ROCK FACE SOMEWHERE!



ONLY THE DISTANT ECHOES OF HIS OWN VOICE ANSWERED. HE PUSHED OFF VIOLENTLY FROM THE FACE. AT THE APEX OF EACH SWING HE LOOKED FIRST RIGHT AND THEN LEFT. NOWHERE COULD HE SPOT HER HANGING TO THE ALMOST SHEER WALL.



HE REPEATED THE ACTION UNTIL HIS LEGS ACHED AND HIS LUNGS WERE RAW.

WEARILY HE BEGAN ASCENDING THE ESCARPMENT ONCE MORE. SHE MUST BE SOMEWHERE ABOVE HIM, HIDDEN BY THE MISTS. IF SHE WERE ALIVE AT ALL.



FIGURING THE WIDTH OF THE LEDGE THEY HAD CAMPED ON AT ROUGHLY EIGHTY FEET, AND THE DEPTH OF THE FOG BANK AT ABOUT TWO HUNDRED FEET, THAT LEFT A SIZABLE AMOUNT OF CLIFF TO COVER.

HE HAD MANAGED TO COAX HER INTO THE CAR, BUT SHE WAS STILL LIKE A PILLAR OF ICE. HE HAD NEVER SEEN THAT LOOK ON HER FACE BEFORE!

LATER, HE WOULD REMEMBER LITTLE OF WHAT HE'D SAID TO HER DRUNKENLY BEHIND THE WHEEL. BUT, IT DIDN'T MATTER. SHE JUST WASN'T LISTENING.

ALREADY, HE WAS NEAR EXHAUSTION FROM NERVOUS STRAIN AND THE LACK OF NOURISHMENT. THEN, THE CHILLING FINGERS OF THE FOG EMBRACED HIM ONCE MORE. I



HE HAD BEEN LEANING HEAVILY OVER THE STEERING COLUMN, WEAVING INCOMPETENTLY THROUGH THE TRAFFIC, ONE EYE ON THE WHEEL, THE OTHER ON HER FACE...



...TRYING TO ESTABLISH SOME INEFFECTUAL POINT WHEN HER EYES LIT WITH TERROR AND SHE SCREAMED AT HIM. HE HAD NO MEMORY WHATSOEVER OF THE TRUCK...!

HIS TOTAL TIME IN THE HOSPITAL AMOUNTED TO LESS THAN FOUR HOURS!



BUT HER INJURIES LEFT HER COLLAR BONE FRACTURED, A PERMANENT SCAR ACROSS HER TEMPLE, HER RIGHT KNEE POPPED OUT OF JOINT, AND UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD SHE EVER SEE AGAIN...!

HE CAME TO HER BED, GAZED INTO WHAT HAD BEEN HER EYES, AND HE MADE HIS RESOLVE! HE ASKED NOT THAT SHE STILL LOVE HIM, BUT THAT SHE STAY WITH HIM, AND LET HIM TAKE CARE OF HER...!



HE CLUNG TO THE OUTCROPPING WHERE HE'D FIRST RAPPELLED FROM IN NEAR DESPERATION. IT WAS TAKING TOO LONG TO CATCH HIS BREATH AND DOGS WERE SWIMMING BEFORE HIS EYES. HE WAS OVER-TAXING HIMSELF, AND HE KNEW IT.



HE SEARCHED THE LEDGE CAREFULLY, LOOKING FOR SOME CLUE AS TO WHERE SHE MIGHT HAVE GONE. BUT HE FOUND NOTHING. HE WAS WASTING TIME. AT LEAST IT HAD GIVEN HIM A CHANCE TO GET HIS BREATH BACK! HE MOVED TO THE EDGE ONCE MORE...!

HE TRIED TO GAUGE THE DISTANCE HE COULD SEE CLEARLY AND USED THAT TO MARK HIS NEXT POINT OF DESCENT. IT BOTHERED HIM ENORMOUSLY THAT SHE DIDN'T RESPOND TO HIS CALLING. HE TRIED NOT TO THINK ABOUT THAT. PERHAPS SHE LAY UNCONSCIOUS ON A LEDGE SOMEWHERE. UNLIKELY... BUT IT WAS THE ONLY HOPE THAT HE HAD.



HIS ARMS FELT LIKE LEAD, THERE WAS A DRIVING PAIN IN HIS SHOULDERS, AND NOW HE WAS AWARE THAT HIS FINGERS WERE COLD ON THE ROPE. FATIGUE, OR WAS THE TEMPERATURE DROPPING? THE THOUGHT SENT A NEW WAVE OF AGONY OVER HIM. IF A STORM SHOULD COME UP NOW...



SHE WENT TO A SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND. SHE LEARNED TO READ BRAILLE AND USE A GUIDE DOG. SHE TRIED HARD. HE WATCHED HER ON OAKING LEGS AND FOUND NEW DEPTHS OF COURAGE AND DETERMINATION HE'D NEVER KNOWN SHE POSSESSED. THEY NEVER MENTIONED THE SECRETARY AGAIN.



IT COULD HAVE BEEN THE HAPPIEST SUMMER OF THEIR LIVES IF SHE'D HAD HER EYES. SHE WAS NEITHER COLD NOR RADIANTLY WARM TO HIM. BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING. IT WAS TAKING HER MONTHS TO FORGIVE HIM, AND HE DIDN'T KNOW IF IT WAS FOR HER EYES OR FOR HIS AFFAIR, AND HE WAS TOO WEAK TO ASK. HE DIDN'T HAVE HER GREAT, NEW-FOUND COURAGE. "I'M THE HANDICAPPED ONE," HE THOUGHT!



THERE WERE IMPERFECTIONS AMONG THE SERENITY. JUST WHEN HE THOUGHT EVERYTHING WAS GOING WELL, HE'D AWAKEN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AND FIND AN EMPTY BED. HE'D FIND HER DOWNSTAIRS ALL ALONE CURLED UP ON THE SOFA, SOBBING.

SHE WAS BECOMING SO INDEPENDENT THAT SHE NEEDED HIM LESS AND LESS. SHE WAS A SPECTACULAR SUCCESS AS A BLIND PERSON. TO HIS SHAME, HE FOUND HIMSELF RESENTING HER AND HE GREW IRRITABLE.



HE'D BEGUN SPENDING MORE AND MORE TIME AWAY AT NIGHT, BUT NOT AT BARS. HE WENT TO THE MOVIES. HE EVEN WENT TO MOVIES HE DIDN'T LIKE ALMOST TOO LATE HE REALIZED THAT HE WAS TRYING TO PUNISH HER.



PRESSURE BEGAN BUILDING INSIDE HIM. IT ERUPTED ONE LAZY SUNDAY AFTERNOON DURING HER FAVORITE RADIO PROGRAM. HE SCREAMED AT HER. HE RANTED, THREW THINGS, SULKED FOR AN HOUR THEN CRIED AND BEGGED HER FORGIVENESS. SHE SAT THROUGH IT ALL WITH AN IMPASSIVE RESERVE, LISTENING QUIETLY. THEN SHE SAID

I WANT TO GO TO THE MOUNTAINS



HE CHECKED HIS WATCH. IT HAD BEEN TWO HOURS SINCE HE'D DISCOVERED HER MISSING. IT WAS GETTING COLDER NOW, DEFINITELY.



WORSE THAN THAT, IT WAS GETTING CLOSE TO NOON AND THE FOG BANK HADN'T LIFTED. HE PULLED HIMSELF UP ON THE LEDGE FOR THE THIRD TIME AND LAY GASPING

HE WAS NEARLY TOO WEARY TO MOVE. HE COULD RAPPEL DOWN ALL DAY BUT CLIMBING UP WAS COSTING HIM. AT BEST HE COULD COMPLETE ONE MORE TAP BEFORE HE'D NEED AN EXTENSIVE REST PERIOD. AND BY THEN SHE MIGHT BE DEAD.



MAYBE HE SHOULD TRY CLIMBING DOWN AND GETTING HELP FROM THE VALLEY. BUT NO... THAT WOULD TAKE HOURS. AND IF THERE WAS A STORM COMING SHE WOULD CERTAINLY DIE. BESIDES, HE COULDN'T BRING HIMSELF TO ABANDON HER.

A SUDDEN IGY BREEZE BRUSHED HIS FACE. HE LOOKED UP AT THE SKY WITH A GIGAWATT DARK TURBULENT CLOUDS WERE ROLLING OBVIOUSLY IN FROM THE WEST.



HE WANTED TO SIT THERE FOREVER, BUT HE FORCED HIMSELF INTO THE TENT AND DUG OUT TWO CANDY BARS. HIS FINGERS SNOOK SO BADLY HE COULDN'T ADJUST HIS CRAMPONS.

PLEASE GOD...

HE KEPT PICTURING HER HANGING ONTO AN IGY LEDGE, FINGERS AND TOES NUMBING, SIGHTLESS EYES WIDE WITH EMPTY TERROR SCREAMING FOR HIM TO COME. BUT SHE WASN'T SCREAMING! HE COULD HEAR NOTHING!

HE KNELT DIZZILY AT THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF, POUNDING A PITON INTO A CREVICE, MISSING EVERY OTHER BLOW BECAUSE HE COULD BARELY NEFT THE HAMMER. IN HIS HEART HE KNEW HE MIGHT NOT MAKE IT, BACK UP THIS TIME EVEN IF HE FOUND HER, HE LOOKED UP...IT WAS SNOWING.

SHE READ COLETTE RICHARD'S BOOK CLIMBING BLIND AND WAS FILLED WITH AWE. SHE HAD TO TRY IT. WOULD HE HELP HER? HE WAS TERRIFIED FOR HER BUT NEVER LET HER KNOW.



SHE FELL THREE TIMES THE FIRST DAY ON THE TRAINING SLOPES AND THAT WITH THE HELP OF AN EXPERIENCED GUIDE. BUT SHE PERSEVERED, AS HE KNEW SHE WOULD!

HE LEARNED THAT THE BLIND ARE CONSCIOUS OF SPACE EVEN IF THEY CAN'T MEASURE DEPTH. IN FACT, SHE NOT ONLY SENSED GREAT HEIGHTS AND WIDTHS BUT IT HAD A WONDERFULLY EXCITING EFFECT ON HER.

ONCE SHE HAD GAINED FULL CONFIDENCE IN HERSELF AND LEARNED TO TRUST THE ROPE, THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE BECAME EXHILARATING FOR BOTH OF THEM.

SOON THEY WERE CLIMBING WITHOUT THE GUIDE AND FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE ACCIDENT, A GREAT WEIGHT SEEMED TO LIFT FROM HIS SOUL.



IT FELT GOOD AND THEY BEGAN TO LAUGH ABOUT THINGS TOGETHER AGAIN.



HE HAD GONE INTO TOWN ONE AFTERNOON WITHOUT HER TO PICK UP SOME GROCERIES. THE STORE WAS JUST ABOUT TO CLOSE BUT THE GIRL BEHIND THE COUNTER LET HIM STAY AS LONG AS HE NEEDED. IT DIDN'T SURPRISE HIM—SHE'D BEEN SIGNALING TO HIM FOR MONTHS.



HE PAID HER AND SHE GAVE HIM HIS CHANGE, HER HAND LINGERING A SECOND TOO LONG ON HIS. WHEN HE MADE NO MOVE TOWARD HER SHE ASKED HIM TO HELP HER LIFT A SACK OF SUGAR IN THE BACK ROOM. HE AGREED BUT FOUND ONLY AN EMPTY ARMY COT.

SHE WAS YOUNG AND BLONDE AND VIVACIOUS AND STUPID. SHE WAS MARRIED, AND THAT WAS SOMETHING SHE KEPT FORGETTING TO TELL HIM. HE MET HER TWICE A WEEK FOR NEARLY TWO MONTHS AND IN ALL THAT TIME HE NEVER KNEW EXACTLY WHY HE WAS DOING IT.



HE CALLED HER NAME ONE LAST TIME EVEN BEFORE THE LAST ECHO HAD BOUNCED BACK TO HIM. HE KNEW IT WAS USELESS. THE GATHERING CLOUD HAD SEEPED BENEATH HIS PARKA AND HIS BACK SHOOK VIOLENTLY. LET IT, HE THOUGHT, I DON'T CARE ANYMORE!



HE LAY DREAMLY IN THE CRADLE OF THE ROPE AND WATCHED THE SNOWFLAKES DRIFT DOWN. HE KNEW IF HE DIDN'T MOVE SOON HE WOULD NEVER MOVE AGAIN. HE'D GO TO SLEEP AND HIS HANDS WOULD RELAX AND HE'D FALL, SPIRALING DOWNWARD TO THE WAITING ROCKS BELOW. TO LINDA. TO PEACE.



HIS EYES CLOSED SLOWLY, SOMEWHERE IN HIS BRAIN HE WAS VERY SMALL. "CRACKLING WALK" MUTTS LOUDLY BY A BIG CHRISTMAS TREE IN ILLINOIS



CRACK... CRACK... CRACK
HIS EYES FLEW OPEN! HE HELD HIS BREATH. THE CRACKING CONTINUED LIKE STONES BEING KNOCKED TOGETHER.

A WILD HEAT SURGED THROUGH HIM! THE INTERNATIONAL DISTRESS SIGNAL SIX LOUD SOUNDS AT TEN SECOND INTERVALS! HE HAD TAUGHT IT TO HER! HE SCREAMED HER NAME! ABOVE HIM! IT WAS COMING FROM ABOVE HIM! THROUGH A TORRENT OF SWIRLING SNOW HE ASCENDED THE ROPE!



TO BE CONTINUED!

HE'D REHEARSED IT A MILLION TIMES BEFORE IN HIS MIND. HE'D EVEN GONE TO THE TROUBLE OF GATHERING THE COIL OF CLOTHES LINE FROM HIS WIFE'S SUPPLY IN THE GARAGE AND PURCHASING THE BOTTLE OF TABLETS FROM THE PHARMACY. THEY WERE IN THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT. BUT UNTIL NOW, HE'D NEVER HAD THE COURAGE TO USE THEM.

TODAY WOULD BE
DIFFERENT . . .



FRIENDS

HE'D KNOWN THAT EVEN AS HE'D LEFT THE OFFICE FOR THE
LONG DRIVE HOME . . .

TODAY, THE LONGING, THE HOPING, THE PLANNING AND
THE OVERHANGING FEAR WOULD END. TODAY HE'D DO
SOMETHING ABOUT IT . . .





PAUL SWUNG THE CAR DELIBERATELY OFF HIS USUAL ROUTE AND ONTO THE ROAD THAT WOULD, EVENTUALLY, LEAD HIM PAST THE HOUSE OF HIS BEST FRIEND, AND HIS BEST FRIEND'S WIFE...

HE COULD SEE HER NOW IN HIS MIND'S EYE, BUSILY MOVING ABOUT THE HOUSE PREPARING HAL'S SUPPER FOR HIM. HER SOFT, GOLDEN HAIR MOVING SENSUOUSLY AS SHE WALKED, HER VOLUPTUOUS BODY MADDENINGLY SNUG IN HER WHITE BLOUSE AND JEANS!

HOW MANY TIMES HAD HE SEEN THAT BLOUSE IN HIS DAILY FANTASIES AT THE OFFICE? HOW MANY TIMES HAD HE OPENED IT WITH TREMBLING FINGERS IN DREAM-TOSSED SLUMBER?

AND NOW HE WAS GOING TO MAKE THOSE DREAMS REALITY!

HE GUIDED THE AUTOMOBILE THROUGH THE QUAGMIRE OF NORTHERN NEW JERSEY SUBURBS. HE FELT HIS PALMS GROW MOIST ON THE STEERING WHEEL. "DON'T GET NERVOUS!" HE TOLD HIMSELF, "NOW THAT YOU'VE FINALLY GOT THE NERVE!"

IF HE SUCCEUMBED NOW, ALLOWED HIMSELF A SINGLE MOMENT OF RATIONAL THOUGHT, IT WOULD OVERRIDE AND DESTROY HIS DETERMINATION!

HE MADE HIMSELF THINK OF THE FIRST TIME HE'D SEEN HER! THAT DAY HAL HAD BROUGHT HIM HOME FROM WORK TO PICK UP SOME PAPERS FOR THE OFFICE. THE FIRST TIME HE'D SEEN THE SNUG WHITE BLOUSE...

HI, HONEY!
SAY, I'D LIKE YOU
TO MEET A BUSI-
NESS BUDDY OF
MINE!



HONEY,
YOU ENTERTAIN
OUR GUEST... I'LL
GET THOSE PAPERS
AND BE RIGHT
WITH YOU,
BUDDY!

WOULD
YOU LIKE A
DRINK
PAUL?



THAT WEEKEND THE FOUR OF THEM
HAD GONE DANCING IN NEW YORK.
HE'D MANAGED TO DANCE WITH
JANICE TWICE WITHOUT MAKING IT -
LOOK TOO OBVIOUS, THE TOUCH AND
SMELL OF HER NEARLY DRIVING HIM
MAD!

PAUL HAD
STOOD
TRANSFIXED,
HIS
HEART
THUNDER-
ING IN HIS
CHEST.
NEVER IN
HIS LIFE
HAD HE
SEEN
ANYTHING
LIKE
HER!
EVEN IN
THOSE
FIRST
FLEETING
SECONDS
HE KNEW
WITH AN
UNQUALIFIED
CERTAINTY
SHE HAD
TO BE
HIS!



HE COULDN'T STOP
STARING. COULDN'T
SEEM TO GET ENOUGH
OF HER, AS IF HUMAN
EYES WEREN'T SENSITIVE
ENOUGH TO DEVOUR ALL
THAT INCREDIBLE BEAUTY!



HE'D FOUND HIMSELF TREMBLING ALL THE WAY HOME
WHEN HIS WIFE ASKED HIM WHAT WAS WRONG. HE COM-
PLAINED OF A HEADACHE! AND LATER, WHEN THEY MADE
LOVE, IT WAS IN THE DARKNESS... AND IT WAS JANICE HE
HELD IN HIS ARMS!

PAUL REACHED OVER AND FLIPPED OPEN THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT, LIFTED OUT THE ROPE AND TABLETS AND SLIPPED THEM INTO HIS SUIT JACKET...

HE REMEMBERED WHAT THE PHARMACIST HAD SAID...

I COULD GET SENT UP FOR THIS, SO BE CAREFUL!

NOW REMEMBER THE DOSAGE! NO MORE THAN TWO TABLETS! ONE WILL MAKE YOU DOPEY, TWO WILL PUT YOU OUT, THREE WILL GET YOU A COMA

AND FOUR... PFFFT!

THAT'LL BE FIFTY BUCKS PLEASE!

HE NOSED THE SEDAN INTO HIS FRIEND'S DRIVEWAY AND CUT THE ENGINE. HE SAT QUIETLY FOR A MOMENT, CONSCIOUS OF THE RAPID THUDDING OF HIS HEART. THIS IS IT! DON'T THINK! DO IT!

ALMOST ANGRILY HE CLIMBED OUT OF THE CAR! HE WAS AWARE OF THE BAGGING WEIGHT OF THE BOTTLE AND ROPE IN HIS COAT. HE WONDERED, WOULD SHE LOOK AT HIS SUIT JACKET AND ASK HIM WHAT WAS IN IT? HE FROZE

DOES IT SHOW?

STOP IT! YOU'RE MAKING EXCUSES! DO IT! NOW!



A BLUEJAY DIPPED ACROSS THE SKY AND ALIGHTED ON A TREE IN THE FRONT YARD, PAUL GLANCED BACK AT THE SILENT HULK OF HIS SEDAN

YOU
CAN STILL
LEAVE! IT'S
NOT TOO LATE!
GET OUT OF
HERE WHILE
YOU STILL
CAN!

WHEN THE DOOR OPENED, HE
JERKED AROUND SO QUICKLY
THAT IT SENT A JOLT OF PAIN
UP HIS NECK. JAMICE STOOD
THERE, SMILING IN SURPRISE
SHE WAS WEARING A YELLOW
SWEATER

PAUL
WHAT A NICE SURPRISE!
COME IN!

ONCE INSIDE, WITH THE DOOR SHUT SAFELY BEHIND HIM,
IT ALL SEEMED SUDDENLY WORTHWHILE. HE FELT
HIMSELF RELAXING A LITTLE...

HAL'S NOT
HOME...WORKING LATE
TONIGHT

I KNOW
HE ASKED ME TO PICK
UP SOME PAPERS ON
MY WAY HOME

IT WAS STANDARD HOSPITALITY, HE WAS SUPPOSED TO REFUSE THE DRINK, TELL HER HE HAD TO RUSH. YVONNE WOULD BE WAITING WITH SUPPER, BUT HE DIDN'T. IT WAS HIS CUE...

THANKS
DON'T MIND IF
I DO.

HAL
MUST HAVE
FORGOTTEN TO TELL
ME ABOUT THE PA-
PERS. DID HE SAY
WHERE HE PUT
THEM?

PERFECT! PERFECT! HE WATCHED
UNTIL SHE'D LEFT THE
ROOM. THEN, WITH
FINGERS SHAK-
ING, REACHED
QUETLY
FOR THE
TABLETS.

HE HALF EXPECTED HER TO MAKE A SOW
FACE. EXAMINE THE GLASS. SHE DIDN'T.
THE PHARMACIST WAS RIGHT. THE DRUG
WAS TASTELESS.

I'M
SORRY, PAUL.
I CAN'T FIND
THE PAPERS.
ARE YOU SURE
HE SAID THE
STUDY?

IT'S NOT
IMPORTANT, I
CAN GET THEM
TOMORROW.
HERE, TOAST
THE EVENING
WITH ME...

SO, WHAT
HAVE YOU AND YVONNE
BEEN DOING THESE
DAYS?

SAME
AS ALWAYS, LOAFING
AROUND AND GROWING
FILTHY RICH.

NOW WHAT?
MAKE SMALL
TALK UNTIL THE
DRUG TOOK
EFFECT? HE SUD-
DENLY REALIZED
HE HAD NOTHING
TO SAY TO HER.
WITHOUT HAL
AND YVONNE
THERE TO ACT
AS BUFFERS,
CONVERSATION
TRAILED OFF
RAPIDLY TO
OBLIVION. HE
NEVER REALIZED
UNTIL NOW HOW
COMPLETELY
PHYSICAL HIS AT-
TRACTION TO
HER WAS.

HE CLEARED HIS THROAT, TRYING TO REMEMBER WHAT THE PHAR-
MACIST HAD SAID ABOUT THE TABLETS. WAS IT TEN MINUTES BEFORE
THEY BECAME EFFECTIVE OR TWENTY? HE WONDERED SUDDENLY
WHAT HE'D DO IF THEY DIDN'T WORK AT ALL. WHAT IF THE DRUGGIST
HAD TRACKED HIM, FILLED THE BOTTLE WITH ASPIRIN?

BZZZZZZ!!

NOW
WHO COULD
THAT BE?

PANIC DROVE A
STEEL GLOVED
FIST INTO HIS
HEART. A VISITOR!
MY GOD, SHE'D
TAKEN THE DRUG
AND NOW SHE WAS
GOING TO LET
SOMEONE INTO
THE HOUSE!

HE WAS
FINISHED! HE
HAD TO STOP
HER!

STOP HER
YOU FOOL! WHOEVER
IT IS WILL GO AWAY
IF SHE DOESN'T AN-
SWER THE DOOR...
THEY'LL THINK
NO ONE IS
HOME!

YES?

COLLECTING
FOR THE EVENING
TIMES, MA'AM!

I-I-
PAUL... DIZZY...

JANICE?
WHAT IS
IT?

OH-I



PAUL LAY HER ON THE LIVING ROOM SOFA, AND WHIPPED OFF HIS JACKET, THROWING IT OVER A CHAIR. SHE MOVED LANGUIDLY ON THE SOFT CUSHIONS, HEAD LOLLING, BREASTS MOVING GELATINOUSLY BENEATH THE TAUT SWEATER. HIS HAND TWITCHED...



SHE MUMBLED SOMETHING INCOHERENT AS HE MOVED BACK ACROSS THE ROOM AND CAREFULLY PULLED THE CURTAINS. HE MOVED AROUND THE HOUSE AND CHECKED ALL THE DOORS. THEN HE WENT TO THE KITCHEN AND PULLED A SHARP STEAK KNIFE FROM ONE OF THE DRAWERS...



WHEN HE RETURNED, JANICE WAS SLEEPING QUIETLY ON THE SOFA. HE SAT DOWN BESIDE HER AND LIFTED HER TO A SITTING POSITION.




HE SLAPPED HER FACE. HER HEAD JERKED UP FROM THE BLOW, EYELIDS FLUTTERING, OPEN.

...HAL?



JANICE'S EYES WERE REGISTERING FEAR. HE WATCHED AS THE DRUGGED GLAZE LIFTED FROM HER PUPILS AND AWARENESS RETURNED. AND NOW THE EYES WERE FASTENED ON HIM, WIDE WITH TERROR AND THE MOUTH WAS OPENING TO SCREAM.



WITH A SWIFTNES THAT SURPRISED HIM, HE CLAMPED A HAND OVER HER DARK LIPS, PUSHING HER BACK ONTO THE SOFA. THAT DAWN DRUGS? HE'D TOLD HIM THE EFFECTS WOULD LAST FOR OVER AN HOUR! HE'D KILL THAT SOB!



SHE ARCHED HER BACK AND TWISTED ON THE SOFA. HE HISS-ED, PRESSING DOWN HARDER WITH THE HEEL OF HIS HAND. SHE KICKED OUT WITH HER LEGS, TRYING TO RISE. PAUL LASHED BACK WITH THE HAND AND SLAPPED HER SAVAGELY ACROSS THE MOUTH. THE SOUND CRACKED AROUND THE ROOM.

STOP IT!
STOP IT!



JANICE STARED AT HIM A MOMENT, STUNNED. THEN HER BODY RELAXED SUBMISSIVELY. SHE CLOSED HER EYES AND BEGAN SODDING, SHOULDERS SHAKING SPASMODICALLY. THE SIGHT OF HER LYING THERE WEAK AND DEFENSELESS SENT A WILD HEAT COURSEING THROUGH HIM...

MAKE ANOTHER SOUND AND I'LL HIT YOU AGAIN!

HE WITHDREW THE CLOTHES LINE AND PICKED UP THE STEAK KNIFE. HE CUT THE WHITE CORD INTO SHORT LENGTHS. HE TIED THEM OVER HER WRISTS AND JERKED THEM TIGHT. JANICE WINCED IN PAIN. HE TIED THE OTHER ENDS TO THE WOODEN ARMS OF THE SOFA.

THEN HE TIED HER ANKLES TO THE OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE SOFA. SHE LAY HELPLESS BEFORE HIM, A THIN RIBBON OF BLOOD RUNNING DOWN HER CHIN.

PLEASE
PLEASE



... THIS WAS IT. REALLY IT! THE MOMENT HE'D WAITED MONTHS FOR. THE INSTANT HE'D SPENT COUNTLESS NIGHTS DREAMING OF. ENDLESS DAYS FANTASIZING ABOUT. NOW IT WOULD ALL COME TRUE...

... SMILING, PAUL REACHED FOR THE TOP BUTTON OF HIS SHIRT. .!

HE STOOD BEFORE THE MIRROR IN THE HALLWAY ADJUSTING HIS TIE BEHIND HIM ON THE SOFA THE GIRL BREATHED QUIETLY, HANDS LASHED BRUTALLY TO THE SOFA. PAUL WATCHED HER SILENTLY OUT OF THE CORNER OF HIS EYES AND A SMILE TUGGED AT HIS MOUTH...!

IN THE DRIVEWAY BACKING OUT HE GLANCED AT HIS WATCH AND NODDED TO HIMSELF. HE'D BEEN IN THE HOUSE ONLY AN HOUR. PERFECT! HE ROLLED THE SEDAN INTO THE STREET AND PUT IT IN GEAR. HE LOOKED IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR. HAL'S CHEVY WAS COMING OVER THE HILL BEHIND HIM!

PAUL GRINNED AGAIN AND PULLED AWAY QUICKLY FROM THE DRIVE. HE CLICKED ON THE RADIO AND ROLLED DOWN THE WINDOW BESIDE HIM, LETTING THE COOL AIR RUSH ACROSS HIS HOT FACE. HE WAS STILL SMILING BROADLY. HE FELT GOOD...!

WHEN HE OPENED THE FRONT DOOR HE FOUND THE PHONE RINGING. HE KNEW WHO IT WOULD BE!

PAUL: THIS IS HAL... WELL, HOW DO YOU FEEL?

GREAT! JUST GREAT! HOW'S JANICE, O-KAY?

OH SURE, SHE'S FINE! SAYS TO TELL YOU THAT YOU WERE TERRIFIC! IS YVONNE OKAY?

I JUST WALKED IN HOLD THE PHONE, I'LL CHECK!

SHE SAYS SHE'S MORE THAN SATISFIED, HAL. SHALL WE MAKE IT THE SAME TIME NEXT WEEK?

OH, JUST ONE MORE THING. TELL JANICE SHE FORGOT TO WEAR THE BLOUSE THE WHITE ONE WITH THE RUFFLES. ASK HER TO WEAR IT NEXT TIME. I LIKE IT!

PANTHA

A DRUG DEALING FORMER FRIEND OF ADAM VAN HELSING, DANNY BERGMAN, WAS SLAIN ON THE BROOKLYN WATERFRONT. STRANGLED BY A ZOMBIE, ANTHONY MUNROE, A REPUTED CRIME LORD, WAS LINKED BY THE N.Y.P.D. TO THE SUPERNATURAL DEATH!



PANTHA, WHILE LISTENING TO THE NIGHT'S NEWS ACCOUNTS, LEARNED THAT MUNROE WAS VACATIONING DOWN IN HAITI

THE VAN HELSING PARTY DEPARTS ABOARD CONRAD'S YACHT ON THE MORNING TIDE. THE OSTENSIBLE REASON FOR THEIR JOURNEY IS TO VISIT CONRAD'S OLD COLLEAGUE, DR. RICTUS, TO HELP PANTHA RECOVER HER LOST MEMORIES!

BUT THEIR VOYAGE TO HAITI WAS DETECTED BY A VODOO QUEEN, MADAME RED EYES, WHO DESIRES THEIR INDIVIDUAL DEATHS FOR HER OWN UNFATHOMABLE REASONS



THE LAIR OF DR. RICTUS

AS CERTAIN DOOM SWIFTLY APPROACHES THE STORM-TOSSED VAN HELSING YACHT, A HARD BLAST OF WIND HURLS A HAPLESS GULL ONTO THE SHIP'S REAR WOODEN DECK!

CONRAD HEARS THE BONE-SHATTERING IMPACT AND INSTANTLY SPRINGS INTO ACTION!



HE UNSHEATHS HIS SWORD/NE AND, LIFTING THE BLADE HIGH OVER HIS HEAD...



MERCIFULLY SLAYS THE CRIPPLED CREATURE!



FOR THE BRIEFEST MOMENT, A LOOK OF NAKED FEAR CROSSES THE YOUNG MEDIUM'S IMPASSIVE FACE...

...A LOOK RAPIDLY REPLACED BY THE STEELY RESOLVE OF RELUCTANT UNDERSTANDING. SHE SLIPS INTO A DEEP TRANCE.

IMPLORING A POWERFUL GOD OF VOODOO TO ENTER HER BODY, AND POSSESS HER VERY SOUL.



SUDDENLY, MOONCHILD CRIES OUT IN A GRATING VOICE AS IF POSSESSED...!

BADE!
SOGBOI AGAU!
STOP!

SO SPEAKS
AGWE, LORD OF THE
SEA AND RULER OF THOSE
WHO SAIL ITS SHINING
SURFACE.

CEASE
I SAY
AGWE
COM-
MANDS
YOU
ALL!

AS IF IN RESPONSE TO HER BOOMING WORDS THAT CARRY EVEN OVER THE SHRIEKING WIND, THE SWIRLING STORM IS SUDDENLY GONE! THE FLUFFY CLOUDS, THE SLOWLY RIPPLING SURFACE AND THE IMPOSSIBLY BLUE SKY HELD NOT A TRACE OF THE VANISHED VIOLENCE!

PANTH...
WH-WHAT HAPP-
ENED?

MOONCHILD
AND YOUR FATHER
PULLED OFF SOME KINDA
VOODOO RITE, LOWER THEY
SAVED OUR OTHERWISE
SALTY SKINS



VOODOO!
DAD! HOW COULD
YOU?



DIDN'T
YOU EVER HEAR
OF FIGHTING FIRE
WITH FIRE,
SON?

SURE
BUT... GEEZ,
SOMEHOW IT DOESN'T
SEEM RIGHT



DO NOT WORRY.
YOUNG MASTER. ANY
BAD KARMA EARNED BY THE
DEED IS ON THIS ONE'S
HEAD AND NO OTHER

MOONCHILD,
I- I WHAT I'M TRYING
TO SAY IS... WE ALL
OWE YOU A DEBT OF
GRATITUDE
THANKS!

ADAM DISAPPEARS BACK INSIDE THE STORM-DAMAGED CABIN AND SHORTLY THE YACHT'S TWIN SCREWS COME THROBBINGLY TO LIFE



WOW! I'VE
A GUT FEELING
MOONCHILD PLACES
ADAM'S LIFE BEFORE
HER OWN. WHAT'S
HER CONNECTION
WITH HIM?

SOME EIGHTEEN HOURS LATER, IN THE GATHERING DUSK, THE WAVE-BATTERED BOAT LIMPS INTO PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI'S RAMSHACKLE CAPITAL.

BY THE TIME A VEHICLE IS RENTED, SUNSET'S TROPICAL FIRE HAS DEEPENED INTO DARKEST NIGHT

IF MEMORY SERVES ME CORRECTLY, IMMANUEL'S RESIDENCE IS AN OLD FRENCH FORT AT THE END OF THIS DIRT ROAD

WOMEN'S LIB OR NOT, I STILL THINK I SHOULD BE UP FRONT AT THE WHEEL

SO WHAT IF SHE CAN DRIVE BETTER THAN ME? IT'S A MATTER OF-I

WHAT IS THAT?

GRAVEL FLIES AND THE JEEP SLIDES SLIGHTLY TO ONE SIDE AS MOONCHILD APPLIES THE BRAKES!

A GREAT BARREL-CHESTED FIGURE SLOWLY TURNS AND SHAMBLES AWAY FROM THE GLARE OF THE HEADLIGHTS INTO THE SURROUNDING JUNGLE!

AFTER WE INVESTIGATE MUNROE'S LINK WITH THE ZOM-BIE MURDERS!

ADAM!
IT'S A BIG-FOOT!

B-BUT WHAT THE DEVIL'S HE DOING HERE IN HAITI?

WE'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO LOOK INTO IT LATER PANTH.

SWAMPY JUNGLE GROWTH IS ABRUPTLY REPLACED BY THE PERCIPITOUS EDGE OF A CLIFF! THE COLORFUL GROUP GASPS IN COLLECTIVE AMAZEMENT AT THE CASTLE-FORTRESS OF DR. RICTUS

FAR OUT!

WHAT YOU SAID GOES DITTO FOR ME, PANTH!



I UM, REALLY LIKE THE DECOR. EARLY CHRISTOPHER LEE, ISN'T IT?

PLEASE, WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE. ADAM, THE DOCTOR IS AN OLD AND DEAR FRIEND OF MINE.



YES?

WE'RE THE VAN HELSING PARTY, HERE TO SEE DR. RICTUS.

I'M SORRY, DE DOCTOR, HE IS NOT IN RIGHT NOW.



BUT, BUT DIDN'T YOU GET THE TELEGRAM WE WERE COMING?

NO! DERE AIN'T NO MESSAGE, AND DERE AIN'T NO DOCTOR! NOW GO! AT ONCE!



THAT SCREAM SOUNDED LIKE IT CAME FROM DOWN THIS HALL.

ONE SIDE, WOMAN. SOMEONE IS IN PAIN. GREAT PAIN.



THAT'S GOTTA BE THE DOC DOING THE IRONSIDE NUMBER.

ONLY ONLY HE LOOKS HALF DEAD!

WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE? WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY HOUSE?





PLEASE
ALLOW ME
TO EXPLAIN,
MISS
UHF?

OCTAVIA
OCTAVIA
RICTUS

A PLEASURE
TO MAKE YOUR
ACQUAINTANCE
I AM CONRAD
VAN HELSING
A COLLEAGUE
AND FORMER
CLOSE FRIEND
OF YOUR
FATHER!



IMMANUEL
IS NOT MY FATHER
HE IS MY HUSBAND

EXCUSE ME
YOUR VOICE. I YOU
SOUND SO YOUNG

I AM
NOW LET ME
EXPLAIN SOME-
THING TO
YOU



IMMANUEL
OBVIOUSLY,
IS NOT FEELING
WELL. HE'S JUST
HAD A SPELL. HE
NEEDS HIS REST
AND LOTS
OF IT

I'M
AFRAID I
MUST ASK YOU
TO LEAVE. YOU
NEVER SHOULD
HAVE COME
HERE UNIN-
VITED TO
BEGIN
WITH



WE DID
WIRE AHEAD, MS.
RICTUS. ONLY WE COULDN'T
STICK AROUND NEW YORK COOL-
ING OUR HEELS WAITING
FOR A CONFIRM-
ATION



PANTHA'S RIGHT
AND IF YOUR HUSBAND'S
AS SICK AS YOU SAY, WE
SHOULD CALL A HOSPITAL
GET HIM profes-
sional care

NO! NO DOCTORS!
HE WILL BE FINE IN THE
MORNING, I TELL YOU!



IN THAT CASE,
PERHAPS YOU CAN PUT US
UP FOR THE NIGHT,
EH?

IT IS IMPERATIVE
THAT I SPEAK WITH YOUR
HUSBAND WHEN HE'S, ER,
FEELING BETTER





THE FOLLOWING MORNING, A SUMPTUOUS BANQUET IS SET FOR BREAKFAST.



I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, ADAM, BUT I SLEPT SOLIDLY AS A LOG! HOW ABOUT YOU, MOONCHILD?

ADAM'S ALOOF ORIENTAL BODYGUARD WHISPERS IN A SUBDUED VOICE TINGED WITH MENACE



BEWARE OF DR. RICTUS MY MISTRESS THAT ONE HAS NO SOUL

WHY, MOONCHILD, WHAT A TERRIBLE THING TO SAY ABOUT THAT SICK OLD MAN. DR. RICTUS IS OUR HOST!



DID I HEAR SOMEONE MENTION MY NAME, HMM?

I-H-MANUELI IS THAT YOU?

IN THE FLESH CONRAD! I'M HALE AND HEARTY!



BUT LAST NIGHT, WE THOUGHT YOU-I

A MINOR COMPLICATION, AN ADVERSE REACTION TO THE MEDICATION I'VE BEEN TAKING

BUT TELL ME, WHAT BRINGS YOU TO MY HUMBLE ABOVE CHATEAU RICTUS?



IT'S PANTHA'S MEMORY, IMMANUEL. THERE'S SOME SORT OF BLOCKAGE I THOUGHT PERHAPS YOUR WORK WITH ANA AND ISOPRINSINE COULD



SAY NO MORE, I'LL BE GLAD TO DO WHAT I CAN. AFTER BREAKFAST, I AM UTTERLY FAMISHED

LOOK AT HIM SHOVE! AWAY THOSE EGGS HE'S NOT ALL ANYMORE, AND IS THAT MY IMAGINATION OR DOES HE LOOK YOUNGER?

A SHORT INTERVAL LATER, EVERYONE, MINUS MOONCHILD, GATHERS IN A STONE-HEWN CHAMBER



RELAX, PANTHA
THIS INJECTION OF VASOPRESSIN
COUPLED WITH THE TRANQUIL-
IZING ELECTRICAL IMPULSES OF
THE MNEMONIC HELMET

MY OWN
INVENTION. BY THE WAY
SHOULD STIMULATE YOUR SUP-
PRESSED THOUGHT-
PATTERNS!



IMMANUEL!
LOOK AT THESE TISSUE
AND BLOOD SAMPLES

HM. MOST
UNUSUAL. HER CELLS,
HER OVER-ALL METABOL-
ISM APPEARS TO BE
PARANORMAL

CAPABLE
OF RAPID HEALING
AND SUDDEN CHANGE
TO SUIT ENVIRON-
MENTAL FACTORS,
AMONG OTHER
THINGS.



MY CON-
CLUSIONS EX-
ACTLY.

PERHAPS THEN,
OUR LOVELY PATIENT IS
A MUTANT OF THE HUMAN
SPECIES, OR SOMETHING
MORE?



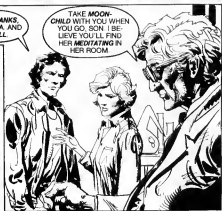
THE DOC'S
CLOSE TO THE TRUTH.
BUT IF DAD VOUCHES
FOR HIM, I GUESS
IT'S OKAY IF HE
FINDS OUT ON
HIS OWN

UH DOCTOR,
TELL ME, HOW LONG
WILL THIS TREAT-
MENT TAKE?



OH,
SEVERAL
HOURS!

BUT WHY
DO YOU ASK? IS
THERE SOMETHING
YOU MUST DO? OR
SOMEPLACE YOU
HAVE TO GO?





Salomé

PRINCESS
SALOME IS LOOK-
ING LOVELY THIS
EVENING!

SALOME, DAUGHTER OF THE KING
OF THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF
JUDEA, HAS BLOSSOMED INTO THE
GREATEST BEAUTY OF THE EMPIRE! BUT,
JUST AS SURELY AS CAESAR AUGUSTUS
RULES IN ROME, SALOME'S AWAKENING
BODY IS BARELY UNDER CONTROL. PERHAPS
IT WILL BE A NEW FACE, A GENTLY
SPOKEN WORD, OR SIMPLY THE
ROMANTIC LIGHT OF A JUDEAN
MOON THAT WILL UNBIND A
CHILD'S TENUOUS GRIP ON
HER OWN BODY!

DO I DETECT
AN INFATUATION WITH THE
KING'S DAUGHTER?

YES, I
THINK I DO
YOU'D BETTER
BE VERY CARE-
FUL

NEVER HAS
A MORE BEAUTIFUL
OR WILLFUL CHILD
EXISTED!

LOOK AT HER!
SEE HOW LOVELY SHE
LOOKS STANDING THERE IN
THE MOON'S LIGHT! SHE
IS A WOMAN IN EVERY
SENSE OF THE WORD!

THE KING
WOULD PUNISH YOU
IF HE HEARD YOU TALK
LIKE THAT! MAY THE
GODS PROTECT YOU
FROM EVIL THIS
NIGHT!

HMPH . . . THERE ARE
NO GODS ANY MORE! THE ROMANS
HAVE CHASED THEM ALL AWAY EVEN
THE JEWS WORSHIP A GOD THEY
CANNOT SEE! THEY MAY AS
WELL NOT HAVE ONE
AT ALL!

THEY DON'T.
THEY JUST HAVE THAT
RABBLE-ROUSING PRO-
PHET OF THEIRS

HAVE
YOU LIST-
ENED TO
HIM?

YES! WHAT A
LUNATIC! NO WONDER
THE KING DROPPED HIM
INTO THE PIT!

SUDDENLY THE IDLE
CONVERSATION OF THE
GUARDS IS INTERRUPTED
BY A DEFIANT CRY!

AFTER
ME WILL COME
SOMEONE MUCH
STRONGER THAN I!
HE WILL RIGHT ALL
WRONGS AND MAKE
THE DESERTS
BLOOM!







YOU ARE
THE DAUGHTER OF
BABYLON! YOU ARE ALL
THAT IS BASE AND PERVERSE
IN GOD'S WORLD! GO
FOR EVEN YOU WILL
BE JUDGED BY
GOD!

SPEAK ON,
PROPHET! YOUR
VOICE HAS CAPTURED
MY SOUL AND AWAK-
ENED MY BODY!

DO NOT
TOUCH ME, SALOME!
YOU ARE A PROFANITY
IN THE EYES OF
GOD!

BUT I MUST
TOUCH YOU! I LOVE
YOU! MY VEINS ARE
ON FIRE! I MUST
HAVE YOU!

YOU WILL
NOT! YOU ARE
NOTHING BUT A VERY
SPOILED CHILD TRAP-
PED IN A VERY
VOLUPTUOUS
BODY!

THIS BODY
KNOWS IT'S A WOMAN
AND IT KNOWS WHAT
IT WANTS



... I WILL
KISS YOUR LIPS
THEY'RE SO LOVELY
LIKE CORAL GLOWING
IN A TWILIGHT
SEA

I THINK
I'D RATHER DIE
FIRST! *

YOU WILL
ANYWAY! BUT RE-
MEMBER THIS
WILL KISS YOUR
LIPS...





MY KING!
I MUST SPEAK
WITH YOU!



AH, SALOME,
MY DAUGHTER! WHY
ARE YOU OUT UNDER
THIS STRANGE
MOON?

NO, THE
MOON IS JUST THE
MOON
LET US GO
INSIDE!



YOU
SEEM TROUBLED!
HERE, HAVE SOME WINE
IT WILL LIGHTEN YOUR
SPIRITS!

NO, I'M
NOT THIRSTY!

WHAT
IS IT?

IT'S THE
PROPHET! HE'S SO
STRANGE!



OH! HE'S
NOTHING MORE THAN
ONE OF THOSE FANATICS
THAT COME ALONG
ONCE IN EVERY
GENERATION

I FIND
HIM ODDLY
COMPELLING
AND DAN-
GEROUS

I THINK
HE SHOULD BE
KILLED!



SALOME, ARE
YOU IN LOVE WITH HIM? DID
HE REJECT YOU? WELL, CHEER
UP! YOU WILL FALL IN
LOVE AGAIN!

AND ANYWAY,
HE IS BETTER OFF
WHERE HE IS - IN PRISON!
IF I WERE TO KILL HIM, THE
PEOPLE WOULD RISE UP
AND KILL US ALL!



NOW, SALOME,
DANCE FOR ME! AND I
WILL GIVE YOU WHATEVER YOU
DESIRE - PERHAPS EVEN
HALF MY KINGDOM!

DO YOU
SWEAR YOU
WILL GIVE ME
WHATEVER I
ASK FOR?

I SWEAR IT
UPON MY CROWN! UPON
MY GODS YOU SHALL
HAVE WHAT YOU
DESIRE!

HAVE MY
SLAVES BRING MY
BEST PERFUMES AND
THE SEVEN VEILS
FROM THE TEMPLE
OF VENUS!



SUMMON THE
MUSICIANS

...AND I
WILL DANCE BARE
FOOTED IN HONOR
OF THE GODS
OF LOVE!



THE ORCHESTRA FILLED
THE AIR WITH A TREM-
ULOUS SIGH AND
SALOME
BEGAN



THE CHILD-WOMAN OF JUDEA, IN
FULL POSSESSION OF HER
INCREDIBLE BODY, UNCLAD
AND TURNED



AT THE BOTTOM OF THE
PRISON PIT, THE PRO-
PHET BROKE INTO A
COLD SWEAT. HE KNEW
INSTINCTIVELY THAT THE
MOMENT OF HIS FATE
WAS AT HAND!



ON HIS THRONE THE
KING SWEATED! HE SAT
THERE STARING AT THE
RIPE BODY OF HIS
DAUGHTER. AND HE
FELT DESIRE GROW IN
HIS LOINS!

SHE SHED ONE VEIL AFTER
ANOTHER...



SALOME DANCED AS
NEVER BEFORE, WITH
PASSION AND ECSTASY...



WITH LUST AND
DESIRE UNTIL FINALLY
THE KING SAT...



...MESMERIZED!





MAGNIFICENT!
EXTRAORDINARY! I
WILL KEEP MY PROM-
ISE TO YOU! SAL-
OME... WHAT DO
YOU DESIRE?

I WANT
BROUGHT TO
ME ON A TRAY
OF SILVER...



THE
PROPHET'S
HEAD!



ARE YOU MAD? THE
PEOPLE WON'T STAND FOR IT
THEY THINK HE'S A HOLY MAN!
THEY'LL KILL US ALL!

AND IF I
SOMEHOW ESCAPE,
THE ROMANS WILL
TRACK ME DOWN
AND EXECUTE ME
AS A TRAITOR!

AND YOU
WANT TO KILL
US ALL JUST
FOR A PETTY
VENGEANCE?



BUT DON'T YOU
UNDERSTAND? WE RULE HERE
ON THE SUFFERANCE OF ROME
THEIR TROOPS CONQUERED
THE LAND! THEY MADE
ME KING

AND
THEY CAN UN-MAKE ME
KING!



I DON'T
CARE...I
WANT THE
PROPHET'S
HEAD.

NO
MATTER
WHAT THE
COST!

OR I SHALL
TELL THE PEOPLE OF
A FATHER WHO COMMITS
INCEST WITH HIS
DAUGHTER!



AND YOU
KNOW THEY
NEVER WILL
STAND FOR
THAT!

EXECUTIONER
GIVE HER WHAT SHE
WANTS! SHE IS MY
DAUGHTER

I HAVE
NEVER BEEN ABLE TO DENY
HER ANYTHING



WHY DON'T
YOU LOOK AT ME
PROPHET?

WHY
DON'T YOU
SPEAK TO
ME?

YOU WERE
THE ONE PERSON I
TRULY LOVED!

AND NOT
EVEN YOUR DEATH
CAN QUENCH THE FIRES
OF DESIRE BURNING
IN MY VEINS!

KISS ME!

STOP! SALOME
THAT'S DISGUSTING!
HOW COULD...!
WHY...?

THERE!
I SWORE I'D
HAVE YOU EVEN IF
IT MEANT YOUR
DEATH AND
MINE!

FOR ONLY
IN DEATH
COULD WE BE
TOGETHER IN
PEACE!

IT WILL BE PROOF
OF MY JUST RULE...FOR NOT
EVEN MY DAUGHTER CAN
ESCAPE HER CRIMES!

AND PERHAPS
THE KINGDOM WILL
REMAIN AT PEACE.

IN DEATH
IT SHALL BE! I WILL
TELL THE PEOPLE YOU
KILLED THEIR PRECIOUS
PROPHET!

GUARDS...
KILL HER!

end

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

SCINTILLATING NEW PRODUCTS FROM THE MOVIE!



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#26294—\$5.50

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#26293—\$5.50

YODA
#26295—\$5.50

HAN SOLO
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NEW! THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK FIGURINES

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new!



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new!

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new!



THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

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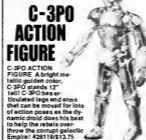
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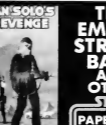
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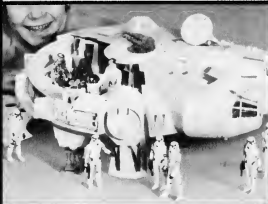
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